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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002620

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR CGURNEY
PARIS FOR CNEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2012

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [Z1](#)

SUBJECT: MDC MASS ACTION: NEXT STEPS

Classified By: polchief Matt Harrington. Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

Mass Action

1. (C) Gandhi Mudzingwa, special advisor to MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, told polchief on November 20 that planning for mass action is consuming most of his time and attention. One element of the MDC's efforts on this front, he reported, had occurred on November 14, when groups of 20 women each had converged on police stations in Harare's high-density suburbs to deliver a petition demanding that the people's human rights be respected. They invited the police to join them in a prayer seeking divine assistance in extricating Zimbabwe from its difficulties. Mudzingwa said some of the women were arrested on minor charges, such as obstructing traffic, but that most of them were not, and police at some stations even agreed to join in the prayer. The objective of this action was to help people overcome their fear of the police and to provide a peaceful method for residents to express their increasing anger and frustration.

2. (C) Mudzingwa told us that the MDC is working closely with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to organize a one-day national work stayaway on December 9. The ZCTU, he said, planned to announce the stayaway only "a couple of days" in advance, so that the GOZ would not have significant lead time in which to disrupt the action. If the stayaway is successful, Mudzingwa said the MDC would then "go for the jugular." Asked what he meant by that, Mudzingwa replied that the next activity would be designed to force Mugabe from office, but he declined to be drawn on what sort of activity was being contemplated.

Tsvangirai-Mbeki letter

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3. (C) Mudzingwa told us that, the week of November 11, he had personally met in South Africa with officials in the office of South African President Thabo Mbeki to deliver a letter from Morgan Tsvangirai to Mbeki. The letter (the text of which is conveyed septel) welcomes South African engagement on Zimbabwe but expresses concern that the failure of several recent visiting SAG delegations to engage with the MDC "compromises your image as an impartial broker." The letter was particularly critical of recent public remarks by Foreign Minister Zuma during her recent visit to Zimbabwe and emphasizes the necessity of solving Zimbabwe's political crisis. "The Zimbabwe crisis is real and needs resolution rather than management," Tsvangirai wrote.

Comment

4. (C) Mudzingwa clearly believes that pressure in the form of mass action stands the best chance of resolving Zimbabwe's political crisis. Judging from the November 14 effort at peacefully targeting police stations, the MDC appears to be proceeding very carefully in this direction, engaging in small-scale forms of protest that provide an outlet for party supporters while avoiding triggering the wrath of GOZ security services. A successful one-day stayaway would demonstrate the ability of the labor movement to shut down the country while avoiding the imposition of too heavy an economic burden on workers who are already struggling to make ends meet. We are discreetly checking with our ZCTU sources to learn more about the status of organizing efforts and will then be able to provide a better assessment of the chances of success and possible consequences.

5. (C) The Tsvangirai-Mbeki letter reveals an increasing frustration in MDC circles that President Mbeki is more interested in helping assuage Zimbabwe's economic implosion than in brokering a sustainable resolution of the political crisis which is responsible for it.

SULLIVAN